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on these transverse bars were placed the extremities of the bundle which wrapped the corpse. The description and sketch are based on a model framework, and a wrapped-up figure, one of the wooden images of the island, prepared by the natives to amplify their verbal description.[1] At times, instead of the four supports, two stones were used with a hole in each, into which a Y-shaped stick was placed (fig. 38). While the corpse remained on the ahu the district was marked off by the péra, or taboo, for the dead; no fishing was allowed near, and fires and cooking were forbidden within certain marks—the smoke, at any rate, must be hidden or smothered with grass. Watch was kept by four relatives, and anyone breaking the regulations was liable to be brained. The mourning might last one, two, or even three years, by which time the whole thing had, of course, fallen to pieces. The bones were either left on the ahu, or collected and put into vaults of oblong shape, which were kept for the family, or they might be buried elsewhere. The end of the mourning was celebrated by a great feast, after which ceremony, as one recorder cheerfully concluded, "Pappa was finished."

Looked at from the landward side, we may, therefore, conceive an ahu as a vast theatre stage, of which the floor runs gradually upwards from the footlights. The back of the stage, which is thus the highest part, is occupied by a great terrace, on which are set up in line the giant images, each one well separated from his neighbour, and all facing the spectator. Irrespective of where he stands he will ever see them towering above him, clear cut out against a turquoise sky. In front of them are the remains of the departed. Unseen, on the farther side of the terrace, is the sea. The stone giants, and the faithful dead over whom they watch, are never without music, as countless waves launch their strength against the pebbled shore, showering on the figures a cloud of mist and spray.

Reconstruction and Transformation.—Those which have been described are ideal image ahu, but not one now remains in its original condition. It is by no means unusual to find, even in the oldest parts now existing, that is in walls erected to carry statues, pieces of still older images built into the stonework; in one case a whole statue has been used as a slab for the sea-wall,

[1] The body was no doubt supported by staves, though they were dispensed with in the model, being unnecessary for the wooden figure.

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were looked upon as prizes to be carried off in war, but they were often burnt with the houses in tribal conflict. 212

Ngaara is said to have had "hundreds of kohau" in his house, and instructed in the art, which he had learnt from his grandfather. He is described, with a vivid personal touch, as teaching the words, holding a tablet in one hand and swaying from side to side as he recited. Besides giving instruction, he inspected the candidates prepared by other professors, who were generally their own sons; he looked at their kohau and made them read, on which he either passed them, clapping if they did well, or turned them back. Their sponsors were made personally responsible. If the pupils acquitted themselves creditably, presents of kohau were made to the teachers; if the youth failed, the tablets of the instructor were taken away.

Every year there was a great gathering of rongo-rongo men at Anakena, according to Te Haha, as many as several hundreds of them came together. The younger and more energetic of the population assembled from all districts in the island to look on. They brought "heu-heu" (feathers on the top of sticks), tied pua on to them, and stuck the sticks in the ground all round the place. The inhabitants of the neighbouring districts brought offerings of food to Ngaara, that he should be able to supply the multitude, and the oven was "five yards along." The gathering was near the principal ahu, midway between the sandy shore and the background of hills. The Ariki and his son Kaimokoi sat on seats made of tablets, and each had a tablet in his hand; they wore feather hats, as did all the professors. The rongo-rongo men were arranged in rows, with an alley-way down the centre to the Ariki. Some of them had brought with them one tablet only; others as many as four. The old ones read in turn, or sometimes two together, from the places where they stood, but their tablets were not inspected. Te Haha and his comrades stood on the outskirts, and he and one other lad held maru in their hands. If a young man failed, he was called up and his errors pointed out; but if an old man did not read well, Ngaara would beckon to Te Haha, who would go up to the man and take him out by the ear. Our informant repeated this part of the story identically months later, and added that the Ariki would say to the culprit, "Are you not ashamed to be taken out by a child?"; the offender's hat was taken away, but the tablet was not inspected. 212. 463 [689]